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AR106D

May 25, 1980

Terrorism and Human Rights

Positive Signs:

- Terrorism has been defeated almost completely, with a consequent drop in human rights violations attributable to counter terrorist operations, i.e. fewer targets.
- The Interior Minister has called for the police to return to normal practices in a major speech.
- After almost two years of pleading on our part - as well as by human rights organizations - the Argentine Government has acknowledged the names of people held as executive prisoners.
- There have been a number of prisoner releases, the largest involving 389 individuals in December. (In December, there were approximately 3,600 executive detainees; today the government acknowledges 3,336 executive prisoners.)
- The International Committee of the Red Cross is visiting the prisoners regularly.
- Argentina has reinstituted the "right of option", whereby some executive prisoners may leave the country.
- Argentina has permitted the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to operate a program on behalf of foreign political exiles, primarily Chileans who fled to Argentina after Allende's overthrow.
- Since early 1978, counter terrorist operations have been restricted tightly to avoid unfavorable political ramifications and international embarrassment. This has been accompanied by a tough crackdown on criminal activity by security forces operating under the guise of counter-terrorism (330 police have been jailed, including a senior police officer).
- Action has been taken on a number of high U.S. interest cases, e.g. Publisher Jacobo Timerman is now under house arrest, four of the five members of the Deutsch family have been released, and one of the two Vogles was permitted to go to the U.S.
- Orders have apparently been issued recently that prisoners are not to be released at night, as happened in the case of four prisoners who were abducted and murdered.

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny

Exemption(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Declassify: ( ) In Part (X) In Full

( ) Classify as \_\_\_\_\_ ( ) Extend as \_\_\_\_\_ ( ) Downgrade to \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Declassify on \_\_\_\_\_ Reason \_\_\_\_\_

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-- The Argentine military is turning from counterterrorist to military duties with military schools functioning normally again.

-- Anti-Semitic incidents have been relatively few this past year.

Negative Signs:

-- Thousands of disappearances remain unresolved.

-- Disappearances are continuing albeit at a reduced rate:

1. 26 Uruguayans residing in Buenos Aires disappeared in January (in a Uruguayan operation);

2. 27 persons are believed to have disappeared in April in a series abductions in the San Justo area near Buenos Aires;

3. There is an unconfirmed report that 17 labor leaders disappeared November at a local ceramics plant;

4. On May 23, one source alleged that there have been 30 to 40 documented disappearances of youths between the ages of 17 and 21 in Buenos Aires;

5. As of May, human rights groups were continuing to report new disappearances.

-- Summary Executions continue.

1. In February, four prisoners were murdered shortly after their middle-of-the-night release from La Plata prison.

2. Bodies have reportedly been washing ashore on the Atlantic Coast.

3. A number of bodies were recently discovered at a beach; these possibly included some of those who were kidnapped in December, including reportedly two French nuns.

-- The Embassy believes that the practice of torture in subversive cases remains a problem.

-- While a "right of option" program has been proclaimed, only 60 person have left Argentina, which seems reluctant to cooperate in any international settlement effort involving its own nationals.

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- Jehovah's Witnesses continue suffering harassment.
- A certain amount of press censorship, mostly self-censorship, continues.
- Political activities are currently proscribed.
- Strikes continue to be banned, although wildcat actions have been banned.

ARA/ECA:FERondon

Concurrence: Amembassy Buenos Aires

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